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Managing Racist Pasts

the Black Justice League's Demand for Inclusion and Its Challenge to the
Promise of Diversity at Princeton University

Tomoyo Joshi

Submitted to the Institute of Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies
of Oberlin College

In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

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Introduction

On September 12, 2013, Christopher L. Eisgruber, the President of Princeton University, released a statement on the Report of the Trustee Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity. He remarked about the report that it “will produce results only if we embrace its challenges, give careful thought to its proposals, devise our own strategies and programs, and make diversity and inclusivity integral components of this University's commitment to scholarly excellence.”¹ Two years later, in November 2015, Asanni York, a Black undergraduate student told an interviewer: “[the University administration] talk[s] about issues without talking about the issue. They stray away from making statements that make bold claims because they don’t want to make some people uncomfortable. But black students on this campus feel uncomfortable every day.”² In the first comment, Eisgruber links “diversity” and “excellence,” thereby suggesting that a multitude of difference will create and lead to academic merit. Difference, here, is a positive contribution, a gift that enriches the campus environment. This is a stark contrast to what York suggests—that Black students’ experiences are not the same as non-Black students at Princeton. York’s comments arise out of a time when the Black Justice League (BJL), a Black student group organized in the wake of Michael Brown’s murder in Ferguson, Missouri, staged a sit-in at the President's office.³ The BJL refused to leave his office until the President agreed to sign their list of demands, one of which explicitly called for a culturally specific space dedicated to Black students.

On the one hand, we see an institutional speech act, performed by the President of Princeton University, that supposedly asserts the University’s value of diversity and inclusion. On the other, Black students like York and BJL members are questioning such claims of diversity. If their diversity were truly valued, then what was the purpose of the 32-hour consecutive sit-in, an act of civil disobedience? In other words, there is a gap between the *promise* of diversity by the

institution and actual lives and emotions of Black students on campus. The promise of diversity is that one's "diversity" will grant a guarantee of inclusion, but precisely because it is a promise, it is not necessarily fulfilled. In this paper, I investigate this gap between Princeton University's claims to value diversity, and yet simultaneously, demands by BJL members that point to the *failure* of that promise. This gap is premised upon the misrecognition and conflation of diversity with inclusion: administrators could claim that diversity is valued but that did not guarantee inclusion into the academy.

This paper is divided into two sections. In the first, I examine the relationship between the discourse of diversity and the lack of commitment to racial justice on Princeton's diversity initiative page, "Many Voices, One Future," found online at www.inclusive.princeton.edu. In the second, I analyze the implications of the sit-in and walk-out organized by BJL on November 18th, 2015. In addition to focusing on how BJL members unsettled the "happy" image of Princeton and a pluralistic vision of difference, I also look at the student and administrative response to BJL's actions.

I am ultimately concerned with the significance of "inclusion" and the demand for inclusion: What are the repercussions and implications of demanding inclusion into an institution that has historically rejected the presence of Black students? And how is it that a University can *claim* to value inclusion and diversity, and yet students, such as members of BJL, are making explicit the deception of such claims?

Methods

My primary method is textual discourse analysis based on philosopher Michel Foucault's observation that discourse is "a form of *power* that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance."⁴ I use this definition of discourse because

Foucault makes an explicit connection between discourse and power, and the discourse of diversity is not simply a top-down process in which administrators at universities control how diversity is understood. Rather, discourse is a form of power that even minority subjects themselves use, which reproduces the pervasiveness of the discourse of diversity.

All of my primary sources have been gathered online: websites, blogs, Facebook pages, online petitions and statements. I intentionally examine websites instead of admissions brochures and other printed material because websites are more accessible, particularly to prospective students, staff and faculty. Websites are a tool used widely to sell, present, and create universities' identities. Thus, in looking at Princeton University's diversity initiative web page, I analyze how the reconceptualization of diversity allows institutions to construct an image of themselves as inclusive, accommodating, or progressive, and to strategically market themselves to an audience. Further, I examine blogs and online archives of student newspapers affiliated with Princeton University, such as *The Daily Princetonian* and *University Press Club* to obtain first hand accounts--often written by students themselves--of the campus environment. In addition, I analyze Facebook pages of student organizations, online petitions, and other statements made by the University.

The discussion of Woodrow Wilson's legacy at Princeton University, but more widely, about the lack of institutional support for Black students at Princeton, has attracted prominent media attention, including articles published by *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, and the Huffington Post.⁵ Therefore, my secondary sources are news media that report on campus events.

My focus on online sources emphasizes the prevalence of the web as a crucial tool in disseminating information to the public. My project therefore would look very different ten years ago, when students and institutional relationship to the web did not manifest itself in the way it does now, and it would also look different ten years from now. In other words, I stress the urgency of

this project in 2016: it is in this particular moment in time that primary modes of communication by the institution with its student body and the general public are done online, through the internet.

Why is this Project Feminist?

I claim that my research is a feminist project because I use a feminist methodology. Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland's work *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* is useful here. According to Ramazanoglu and Holland, a feminist methodology is not distinguished as women studying women, nor is there a research technique that is *distinctively* feminist. Women researchers studying women is not in and of itself a feminist project because "feminist consciousness is not derived from a female body, [and thus] women do not have a special claim to know gender." Further, Ramazanoglu and Holland assert that there is no ontological or epistemological position that is distinctively feminist. What distinguishes feminist methodology, however, is the extent to which it "is shaped by feminist theory and politics"; it is feminist insofar as the use of theory, epistemology and ethics enables a feminist researcher to "question existing 'truths' and explore relations between knowledge and power." In the context of this paper, I define feminist theory and politics as knowledge that has been *initially* produced and/or informed by looking at how cisgender women in the Global North have been prevented from participating in the social, economic, intellectual and political domains of society. However, feminist theory and politics have shifted from its initial concerns with cisgender women to an examination of gender, constructions of femininity and masculinity, and the patriarchal desire to define sex and gender in biological terms, to name a few. Put another way, feminist theory and politics is no longer defined solely by the concerns faced by cisgender women in the Global North, but it has expanded to be applicable to different fields and disciplines, even in the hard sciences. These applications have created space to critique the intersection between knowledge production and power.

I owe much of my analysis to the foundations of critical thought that feminist scholars have laid out before me. Feminist methodologies emerged out of a need to capture the experiences of women whose social lives could not be encompassed by “traditional” disciplinary methods.⁶ In addition, feminist scholars have critiqued enlightenment ideas that uphold reason and rationality. These enlightenment ideas create and maintain certain dualisms--mind/body, reason/passion, culture/nature, and male/female--which perpetuate the harmful idea that *because* men are *logical*, associated with the mind and rational thought, men’s ideas are inherently better than women’s ideas, which are all too often thought of as emotional and irrational. Feminist critiques reveal how women and the feminine have been historically devalued by highlighting these relationships between binaries that uphold reason and the objective at the expense of the emotional and the subjective. It is an extension of patriarchal power that prevents the existence of a range of ideas, primarily those that are not measurable to the standard of rationality and reason.

In pointing out how enlightenment ideas structure our lives, feminists also have carved space to critique the seemingly “neutral” process of knowledge production. Dualisms of mind/body, reason/passion, male/female did not arise without context. The creation and distribution of knowledge, then, is an inherently unequal process. My critique of the discourse of diversity is directly informed by feminist critiques of power and knowledge because I am claiming that the discourse of diversity serves the interests of the powerful while maintaining the facade that it is equal and inclusive. Without critical intervention and examination, discourses of diversity are harmful because they create the false illusion that “diversity” *is* beneficial for *everyone*-- when in fact, as I will later demonstrate, “diversity” is a neoliberal tactic to manage racial difference. I am indebted to feminists before me who have carved out space for me to question the supposed legitimacy and universality of particular discourses--discourses of moving on, public safety, and “civil” conversations: who has access to contribute to such discourses? For what purpose and whose interests do these discourses

serve? And what is at stake for administrators, university presidents, faculty, staff and students of color?

This project *must* be feminist because the project of feminism cannot afford to solely look at women or women's emancipation. In destabilizing the category of "women" it is necessary to consider the ways in which race, ability, class, citizenship, geography, and language affect people's lives. It is dangerous, particularly for western feminists, to assume that women throughout the world are united under the organized and systematic power of "the patriarchy"; rather, it must be acknowledged that not all women, especially women in the Global South, enter the social sphere as "Women," because the lens of gender is not necessarily the first and primary form of power to which women are subject.⁷ Further, a feminist methodology challenges the singular structure of patriarchy by allowing space to discuss how women themselves can internalize and perpetuate the same hegemonic ideas as men. In other words, the power of "the patriarchy" is not only that it oppresses women, an idea of power that is top-down, repressive, and singular, but it is *productive* in so far as women carry out the duties of patriarchal thought to police not only their own behavior, but the behavior of others.⁸

Moreover, it is critical to unsettle the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge production. If scholars relegate analysis of race to American studies or ethnic studies, then "race" becomes a category of academic/scholarly inquiry that is only considered in disciplines and fields solely concerned with the examination of race. Since the Combahee River Collective have articulated the necessity of identity politics in their statement, feminists projects must continue to think about how the identity "women" is not separable as a distinctively isolated experience.⁹ Black feminist thought have consistently pointed out the inadequacy of feminist projects, particularly in second wave feminism, to accurately examine, represent and include non-white, cisgender, upper-middle class women in their movements.¹⁰ Therefore, my analysis of the incorporation of racial minority subjects

informed by feminist methodologies is a feminist project because it creates space for intersectional analysis within feminist politics.

In thinking about identity politics and how the academy can center the subjective, I wish to also be transparent in thinking about what this project means for me and particular lived experiences. This project arose out of a curiosity of what difference entails, particularly when my gendered and racialized difference were seen as positive contributions to the institution that I reside in. Feminist scholarship has demonstrated the need to deconstruct the seemingly neutral and objective position of the researcher. As a non-U.S. citizen, I have been more sensitive to the manifestations of American exceptionalism, particularly through the narrative that posits American institutions of higher learning as the epitome of scholarly excellence. I am aware that my experiences are particular to my own and this research would undoubtedly look differently had another person done it. Therefore, it is important to me to dismiss the established “neutrality” of the researcher: I am subjective and my subjective findings are informed through my raced and gendered experiences.

Literature review

The discourse of diversity is founded upon the discourse of multiculturalism most popular in the 1980s and 1990s as affirmative action policies pushed administrators to start institutionalizing minority difference. Multiculturalism “asserts that American culture is democratic terrain to which every variety of constituency has equal access and in which all are represented, while simultaneously masking the existence of exclusion by recuperating dissent, conflict and otherness through the promise of inclusion.”¹¹ From the right, multiculturalism is critiqued for undermining national unity because it “stands in opposition to core American ideals of individual freedom and equality.”¹² In contrast, left critiques of multiculturalism find its emphasis on diversity conceals deep social inequalities. Moreover, multiculturalism focuses on the contribution of individuals and groups to the

assumed greatness of the hegemony. For instance, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz writes that Indigenous people are credited with corn, Thanksgiving, and place names, to name a few additions to Americana, but the “idea of the gift-giving Indian” behind such items obscures the fact that the very existence of the U.S. is a direct result of stealing from and exploiting Indigenous resources and land.¹³ Multiculturalism fails in addressing the nuances of oppression and power because it flattens difference.

Critiques of multiculturalism led to a shift that produced contemporary discourses of diversity. The attention to discourse has been relatively recent; the key scholars I engage with in my first section have published within the past five years. My approach is informed by three key scholars’ works: Sara Ahmed’s *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Roderick A. Ferguson’s *The Reorder of Things: The University and its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*, and Ellen Berrey’s *The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice*. Ahmed argues that diversity work has actually not produced anti-racist, anti-oppressive practices within institutions, but rather has created a discourse of multiculturalism that is only surface-level. She focuses on the word “diversity” and what this discourse “does” in institutions of higher education by interviewing diversity practitioners. Ahmed finds that the commitment to diversity does not equal a commitment to ending racism. Berrey also focuses on “diversity” but takes a sociological approach rather than a cultural studies approach. Focusing on three case studies, she looks at how the word “diversity” has failed to redress racial injustices adequately. In *The Reorder of Things*, Ferguson focuses less on the word “diversity” but similarly critiques how the formation of the interdisciplines, such as ethnic studies or women’s studies, has become vulnerable to state co-option and institutionalization. The student movements in the 1960s, which originally had the intent of radically *transforming* education to create a curriculum that encompassed the needs minority students, instead created opportunities for institutions to absorb, regulate, and manage minority difference.

In my second section, I am informed by affect studies, feminist theory and critical race theory. Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* links feminist studies and queer theory with affect studies. Focusing on the discourse of happiness, Ahmed is concerned with how an expectation to be happy actually masks inequalities, such that by merely pointing out sexism or racism, as is the case for many women of color, one is thought of as bringing "bad" news. In the *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed further discusses what the discourse of pain, fear and anger does, and how emotions instill affective responses in the body and the nation. The association between the body and the nation is investigated further by Nirmal Puwar, in *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*. Puwar asserts that racialized and gendered bodies have a different relationship to space than white bodies, which are typically seen as "universal" and therefore "invisible." These feminist scholars create the lens through which I critically examine the intersections of body, place, space and power.

Part 1: The Discourse of Diversity in Princeton University's "Many Voices, One Future" Website

On November 9, 2015, University of Missouri President Tim Wolfe announced his resignation following a series of student protests demanding his removal. The demands were sparked by his and his administrative team's inadequate handling of racist incidents that happened on campus and his general silence regarding the fall 2014 murder of Michael Brown in the town of Ferguson, only 110 miles from the University's Columbia, Missouri campus.¹⁴ When a Black student activist group "Concerned Student 1950" demanded a ten percent increase in the hiring of Black faculty and staff by the academic year 2017-18, the University's Board of Curators issued a list of eleven initiatives to address the racial climate on campus.¹⁵ Eight of those used the word "diversity" to describe vague assessment, support or actions that the University would undertake.¹⁶ Racially

motivated incidents, along with the specific demand to increase Black faculty and staff, were met with an ambiguous appeal to diversity.

The University of Missouri is not an isolated case; students at Yale University, Claremont McKenna College, Ithaca College and other institutions of higher education throughout the United States are demanding accountability in racial justice.¹⁷ Their calls for racial justice, however, have quickly been turned into a discussion of “diversity” that is offered as a solution. The emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement makes it clear that “racial progress” is a myth, and calling US society “post racial” is a luxury not all can afford.¹⁸ Universities, organizations, and corporations claim, “We are diverse,” as if also tacitly to say, “So how can we possibly be racist?” The student protests are evidence that universities’ appeals to diversity are contradictory to the students’ experience. Their “diversity” is supposedly valued, but needs of students of color are not fulfilled. Therefore, the word “diversity” is worth closely examining, especially when used in statements made to represent universities’ commitments.

In this section, I examine Princeton University’s diversity initiative page “Many Voices, One Future,” found online on <http://inclusive.princeton.edu>, as a case study in how institutions of higher education use “diversity.” I choose Princeton University because it is consistently ranked as the top private research university according to *U.S. News and World Report*.¹⁹ While I do not endorse rankings as an accurate indicator of a university’s worth, rankings are an effective way to measure what the general public regards as “best schools.” As Princeton University continues to be seen as one of the most elite institutions in the world, it is informative to examine a school that is so well-regarded because it is seen as a model of success by other schools.

By demonstrating how diversity is individualized, commodified, and quantified, I examine the relationship between the discourse of diversity and the subsequent lack of commitment to racial justice. In the first subsection, I use textual analysis to interrogate how the website presents

difference as a commodity to be consumed through the (re)articulation of the concept of diversity. In the second subsection, I focus on the quantification of diversity by exploring the visual presentation of the website and the politics of time as constructed by a timeline. In doing so, I critique the discourse of diversity not because I am “against” the concept of diversity, but rather because I am critical of how universities use diversity to evade a commitment to anti-racist practices.

Note that while the word “diversity” can encompass a wide range of different experiences, in the context of this section, I analyze the insufficiency of diversity to address racial inequalities that further reveals how other axes of oppression, such as sexism, ableism, and classism are also ignored.

Diversity as Commodity: Minority Difference is Individualized and Consumed

Princeton University’s colorful and streamlined diversity initiative page “Many Voices, One Future” is a revealing starting point for analyzing how the institution sees “diversity.” The logo is on the top left of the page. The phrase “Many Voices” appears in a myriad of colors--orange, purple, green and blue. The colors symbolize the range of differences that the administration of Princeton imagines their campus to have. Below the phrase “Many Voices” is the phrase “one future,” which, in contrast to the colorful mosaic above, is written in a single shade of purple. The letter “y” in “many” connects to the top of the letter “f” in the word “future.” The phrase “an inclusive Princeton” appears in a smaller font in gray, below. On the right is the university logo, in the same colorful shades as “Many Voices, One Future,” rather than the typical orange and black, following Princeton’s official colors. Below this are subheaders, separated into six sections: “About,” “Our Progress,” “Advocate & Learn,” “Find Community,” “Policies & Reporting,” and “News & Features.”

This title alone reveals a number of things: the phrase “many voices” is first, implying that the existence of many voices leads to “one future,” as opposed to “one future, many voices,” for

instance, which would, in contrast, emphasize the “many” over the “future.” The choice of “voices” rather than “people” is also noteworthy. As a form of synecdoche, voice becomes representative of the individual’s existence, which underscores an assumption that people autonomously express themselves through “speaking,” though their speaking is not necessarily audible. Second, the word “many” is contrasted with “one,” suggesting that despite the many voices, there is still a common unity to be found. The American value of individualism is retained through “many voices” because “many voices” are countable and therefore distinguishable, in contrast to the homogeneity of the idea of a single “future.” It is thus possible to establish a cohesive future that simultaneously exists with and is dependent upon the presence of “many voices,” a mosaic of cultural difference.

According to the “Overview” page, under the header titled “About,”

Many Voices, One Future is Princeton's institutional movement toward greater diversity and inclusion. We're continually working to make the University a place where everyone's perspectives are welcomed and valued, resulting in a positive and more successful future for the institution and the members of our community. We believe having a diverse community is the only way to maintain our position as a world-class university.

The use of the first person plural pronoun “we” makes it clear that this effort involves “us,” multiple individuals and constituencies, not simply the university administrators who presumably drafted or approved the text. They invite “us” to be a part of their diversity. One can imagine members of committees, the faculty, the staff, *people* who are working on efforts to foster a community. Indeed, the section “Our Staff,” also under the same “About” header, features photographs of each of the eleven staff members on the institutional equity and diversity team. The

administration's choice to use "we" instead of referring to themselves as "Princeton" adds a face and personhood to what otherwise would be a faceless, vague university.

By stating that "everyone's perspectives are welcomed and valued," Princeton is making a claim that *all* perspectives matter and that this leads to a "positive" and "more successful future." Commenting on how diversity becomes conflated with happiness, Ahmed writes that "inclusion can become a happy sign of the overcoming of exclusion. Diversity can be used as a technology of happiness: through diversity, the organization is represented happily as 'getting along,' as committed to equality and anti-racism."²⁰ The inclusion of "everyone's perspectives" represents Princeton's student, faculty and staff population as happily "getting along."

The context that welcomes and values "everyone's perspectives," however, does not necessarily create success. Instead of critically evaluating historical inequalities that hinder certain communities from accessing higher education, this statement conveniently evades an analysis of power structures by using vague language and words that celebrate cultural difference instead of accounting for systematic injustices. In other words, if different perspectives are what constitute "diversity," then institutions that use the language of diversity can represent it as a quality that *individuals can bring*. Furthermore, if difference is rendered as a commodity that individuals can contribute to the democratic ideals of the university, then difference can also be consumed. In a society ordered by capitalism, racialized difference embodies a transaction between the university and the "diversity" subject: in exchange for the minoritized subjects' contributions of difference, the university provides a promise of inclusion into the world of the educated elite.

Writing about the consumption of race to interact with difference, bell hooks, in her revolutionary essay "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," observes: "To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality."²¹ Indeed, the consumption of difference via

racialized, gendered and sexualized contact does very little to destabilize the power of those seeking difference—in this case, the white elite men who have historically been entitled to and given access to education in the US. In Berrey’s words, diversity is the “least disruptive sort of inclusion.”²² The appeal of diversity, then, is premised on its relative “safeness”: it is safe to consume, appreciate, learn from difference, because the presence of difference does not threaten the ideals of the corporatized university.²³

The individualization of diversity thus not only facilitates the exploitation of diversity as a resource to be capitalized upon, but also allows one to ignore a critique of social structures.

Princeton’s administration evades such critiques precisely by not naming and identifying actual oppressive systems, such as racism, sexism, classism, and ableism, which create and maintain difference and different experiences. Unlike words such as “equality,” which “seem to evoke some sort of politics of critique or complaint,” as Ahmed asserts, diversity is seen as a “more inclusive language because it does not have a necessary relation to changing organizational values.”²⁴

Diversity’s popularity can be attributed, then, to it being palatable to, and not challenging of the existing power structures.

The language of the website further articulates “diversity” as “the only way” that Princeton can retain its position as a top-tier university by stating “[w]e believe having a diverse community is the only way to maintain our position as a world-class university.”²⁵ In that way, diversity becomes an official value of Princeton; Princeton can foster the image that it values diversity. The link between diversity and Princeton’s institutional values becomes more explicit in the welcome page of the “Many Voices, One Future” website. The website homepage welcomes the viewer with a quotation from the President of Princeton University, Christopher L. Eisgruber: “To achieve the excellence to which we aspire, we must welcome talented people from all backgrounds to Princeton and we must enable them to flourish.”²⁶ This quote is visibly the largest on the site, an intentional

choice to showcase words from the President of the university. To do so underlines the message that Princeton's highest administrative power, the president, values "talented people from all backgrounds." The credibility of this statement stems directly from who has made the statement; if this statement had been made by a student, it would not be viewed as embodying the leadership of the university. Eisgruber's use of "we" is followed closely by a "them": "*We* must enable *them* to flourish." It is "us" that welcomes "them," "us" that *gives* and creates the environment in which *they* flourish. In this rhetoric of "stubborn hierarchies of belonging in the cultural relativist syntax of 'us' and 'them,'" *we* --US institutions of learning that privilege western epistemologies—remain the subject of "our" narrative.²⁷ In defining who "we" are and who "they," the diversity subjects included in the university, are, Princeton reproduces minority difference as something that "we" can incorporate into the academy. "We," in this case, is the normative standard by which "difference" is measured, because "difference" is always relative term, a "difference *to*." This is strategically powerful because now institutions can legitimize what kind of minority difference is favorable, especially through the rhetoric of "excellence." Eisgruber points to a larger idea that diversity is a *necessary* factor in maintaining the "excellence to which [it] aspire[s]." If diversity is the "only way" that Princeton can be a "world-class university," then Princeton's administration can position themselves as the gatekeeper of what diversity means.

Berrey observes the same rhetoric of excellence at the University of Michigan:

Michigan's identity as an innovator in diversity and excellence symbolically redefined the symbolic boundaries of the student body... It constructed inclusion as a common group interest for the community, one that could be advantageous for everyone involved and for the institution itself. It depicted racial minorities as culturally distinct from but culturally

equivalent to white people... It valorized those who fulfilled the idealized archetype of a bright, motivated, studious Michigan student.²⁸

Michigan's inclusion of a certain kind of minority that "fulfilled the idealized archetype of a bright motivated, studious student" is applicable to Princeton: the students, staff, and faculty of color that are accepted to Princeton satisfy the need for the right kind of difference, as measured by standards of excellence and merit. In other words, Princeton, by including certain minority subjects and not others (not every student of color who applies is admitted, after all) is able to define which minority subjects' difference is appropriate or good enough to contribute to the multicultural institution. The demarcation of "good" minorities versus "bad" minority subjects are produced by their level of adherence to standards of excellence. In that process, they go "from being history's humiliations to becoming its most renowned and uplifted achievements."²⁹ The "renowned and uplifted achievements" of racialized minority subjects then become strategic tools for the university, including Princeton, to showcase the success of said subjects as a direct result of the institution's education. This concept invokes a model minority discourse: the success of minority subjects is employed by the university to create a distinction between the people that "didn't make it" and those who did. If *these people* could be successful, the rhetoric goes, why can't you.

If excellence is the standard of how racialized minorities enter the academy, then "diversity" is no longer a word that implies all and any difference. Using Berrey's idea of "selective inclusion," which is "routinely characterized as the representation of high-status, upwardly mobile, or otherwise culturally appealing people of color and women," diversity is desirable only when the subjects incorporated under diversity are non-threatening.³⁰ These subjects are seen as non-threatening precisely because selective inclusion does not subvert power dynamics. If "we," the institution, can

enable “them” to come to this institution, then the power relationship has remained stagnant, if not obfuscated by the rhetoric of diversity.

The quotation from Eisgruber is from a document that responds to a report published by the Special Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Earlier in his response, Eisgruber writes that “Princeton University’s scholarly and teaching missions are inextricably linked to the diversity of our student, staff, faculty, and alumni communities.”³¹ On the surface, this statement is generic and vague; replacing Princeton’s name with another university would generate no more informative characteristic of an institution. Yet, the vagueness and generality are precisely what makes the statement convincing. Such statements become valuable not because of the content but because the statement is made at all; in Ahmed’s words, it becomes a “ritualized or polite speech.”³² Diversity becomes significant because it functions to foster an *image* of the institution as valuing diversity.

Quantifying Diversity, the Politics of Time and Racial Progress Visualized

Whereas I analyzed certain elements of the website by textual analysis in the previous section, I now shift to an analysis informed by visual and statistical data. For instance, in the last paragraph of this overview page, Many Voices, One Future has the sentence:

[The] University has been working on these goals [of making Princeton more inclusive] for many years, and we've created many programs to support our diversity and inclusion goals. But our campus demographics don't reflect society as well as they should, so the work will continue.

What is worth noting in this sentence is that “the work will continue” because the “campus demographics don’t reflect society as well as they should.” In other words, diversity work is

continued because the campus does not reflect that diversity of society. However, this idea assumes several things: 1) that diversity can be quantified as data in a demographic; 2) that diversity can be achieved if it reflects societal demographics; and 3) that diversity is attainable regardless of how students or staff experience inclusion. Such assumptions beg the questions: At what point can Princeton, or any other institution, claim to be diverse? When *will* “the work” be over?

The quantification of diversity is most visible on the “campus demographics” page, shown in Figure 1. Clicking the link to “campus demographics,” one is led to a page that statistically outlines the gender and racial/ethnic demographic of Princeton. The x-axis represents the percentages of students, under the color-coded categories of: Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Multiracial, and Unknown. The y-axis is divided into three categories, with the top category being students (with sub-headers: Undergraduates, Master’s Students, Doctoral Students, and Postdocs), the middle being Professors (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Full professors, and Non-Tenure Track Faculty) and the last category being staff (Senior staff, or All Other Staff).

The color of the graphs follows the overall color palette of the website --purple, orange, green, light blue, and red--continuing the narrative of the happy, multicultural image of Princeton as depicted by the “Many Voices, One Future” logo. One immediately notices that out of the three categories, the “student” category at the top is the closest to an even distribution. Compare, for instance, how the “undergraduates” sub-header has more “Asian,” “Black,” “Hispanic” and “Multiracial” representation compared to the racial/ethnic makeup of “Assistant Professors.”

In such a graphic, Princeton attempts to quantify diversity, as if success can be defined by reaching an unspecified percentage. There is, however, no distinction between domestic and international students in this race/ethnicity graph. A third generation Korean American student can be considered the same as a Vietnamese international student under the umbrella category “Asian.” Even the category of “Black” fails to distinguish what percentage of those individuals are Black

Americans or Black international students. In the article “Ivy League Fulfilled: How America’s Top Colleges Avoid Diversity,” Cord Jefferson points out that while “America’s most elite colleges *do* in fact make it a point to promote ethnic diversity on their campuses, a lot of them do so by admitting hugely disproportionate numbers of wealthy immigrants and their children rather than black students with deep roots—and troubled histories—in the United States.”³³ Admitting affluent international students over working-class people of color enables Princeton to *visualize* and imagine the supposed “diversity” without having to question socioeconomic class in conjunction with racial/ethnic diversity. Ironically, while Princeton emphasizes race as an axis of difference that brings about diversity, it does not choose to define “racism” in its section “Inclusive Language.”³⁴ Instead, it defines “bias,” “international,” “cultural competency,” or even terms like “unconscious bias”—which shifts “difference” from being a result of systematic oppression to a manifestation of the *individual* failure to be “culturally competent.”

In this section, the absence of words such as “oppression” and “injustice” is more telling than the terms’ presence might be. In the absence of these words, diversity becomes a “happy word,” which does several strategic things. If diversity is happy, then there is no real incentive to talk about systematic oppression because that is seen as disrupting the happiness. This creates what Ahmed calls the “happiness duty”: a duty to “speak of what is good but can also be thought of as a negative duty not to speak of what is not good... It is as if you should let go of the pain of racism by *letting go of racism as a way of understanding that pain.*”³⁵ Thus, if the happiness duty involves “letting go” of racism, then under that logic, we are encouraged to let go of the past.

The focus on the future as opposed to the past can also be seen most clearly in the title of the diversity initiative: by describing itself as “Many Voices, One Future,” Princeton automatically redirects our attention to the building of a collective future. The title underlies the idea of a shared

vision that “we” can work on together. To emphasize the future is to invite the community to look *forward* as opposed to back.

The descriptions in the “Historical Timeline” section also contribute to the institution’s discursive erasure of past oppression: “Under the leadership of Princeton President Robert F. Goheen (1957-1972), the University hired its first black professor, began enrolling women graduate and undergraduate students, and gave tenure for the first time to a female faculty member,” the page reads. The naming of the President and the credit to *his* leadership is juxtaposed with the unnamed first black professor and the first woman faculty member. This mirrors the same story: it is *Princeton*, the benevolent, inclusive institution that facilitates the admission of minority difference. With the most recent events on the top and the older events on the bottom, the viewer, scrolling down, goes back to the past. The use of the timeline suggests that the mere passing of time brings about progressiveness. For instance, though the description of the webpage purports to offer both “advances and setbacks” of Princeton’s history. Out of the thirty-one years that are highlighted in the timeline, five can be considered non-celebratory events (such as the owning of slaves, limiting admission of Jewish applicants, and the filing of a lawsuit against sexist practices). However, the two most recent decades of the historical timeline include no “negative” events.

The timeline is a strategic tool that rewrites Princeton’s past and reimagines its history. The revisionist history serves institutional needs because every event seeks to present Princeton as the progressive institution that has undergone only positive change over time to include minority subjects. There is little institutional memory of what injustices have been done, instead only what progress has been achieved. Therefore, the institution can create a narrative of progress through time; it has “accepted women” or “accepted minorities,” which means it has incorporated difference into a normative body.

Diversity: The Myth of Racial Progress

Princeton is able to define the concept of diversity through the “Many Voices, One Future” website. By creating statements about what diversity means, Princeton’s administrators and communications staff imagine diversity as being a necessary factor in the successful positioning of Princeton as a top-tier university. The clean graphic design and colorful logos mask the real inequalities that students, faculty and staff of color face. In that way, diversity does little more than promote institutional appeal. Further, the consistent focus on “diversity” rather than racial justice is a strategic and intentional institutional tactic. Politically purified and purged of “political correctness,” diversity is non-threatening and does not interrupt institutional goals of the corporate university. To focus on the positive effects of diversity means that institutions can define how “racial progress” is measured. The diversity that Princeton imagines is a difference that can be counted, through statistical data—if it can be counted, then Princeton can also make diversity a quantifiable goal. However, if diversity is a goal, then what does it look like? And is this “racial progress?”

Earlier I mentioned the demands made by Concerned Student 1950. Their demands were strikingly similar to the demands made by the Third World Liberation Front in the 1960s.³⁶ Half a century later, the incorporation of racialized minorities into the academy proves that affirmative action policies and diversity talk is not enough, and that whatever racial progress we have imagined is only that: an image. In its claims to aspire to equality (or equal representation), the discourse of diversity ignores historical and sociopolitical contexts of oppression that produce and maintain difference in the first place.

Princeton University is not an outlier. It is one of the many institutions of higher education that produce a site of contradiction: on a campus advertised to students as diverse and inclusive, where their difference is “respected,” racist incidents prove the opposite. Yet, perhaps what the

student protests, such as the one happening at the University of Missouri, demonstrate is not diversity's "failure" to address racial inequalities, but rather the very working of diversity. If diversity was never intended to transform radically the university into an anti-oppressive, anti-racist institution, then what is happening across the United States is a manifestation, an exposure, of diversity's power in placating/masking student demands. Thus, to realize racial justice is to reject the positing of "diversity" as a solution or conclusion. When people of color demand the end to racial inequalities, their demands must not be appeased by vague claims of diversity. Instead, it is imperative to start critically examining who this "diversity" ultimately serves, and to what end.

Part 2: The Black Justice League's Demands for Inclusion

In my last section, I explored how the administration at Princeton University failed to realize racial justice in its promise of diversity through its diversity initiative page, "Many Voices, One Future." In this section, I analyze how the Black Justice League (BJL) at Princeton University recently challenged the rhetoric of inclusion and diversity as articulated in the "Many Voices, One Future" website.

The Black Justice League is a group formed in November 2014 in the wake of the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson.³⁷ While the BJL has been active since its inception, I situate my analysis in the walk-out and sit-in that occurred on November 18, 2015. On this day, roughly 200 students walked out of their classes at 11:00am and headed to Nassau Hall on Princeton's campus, where the President's Office is located. Their aim was to present to President Eisgruber a list of demands that the BJL drafted. The students stated that they would not move until the President signed the document.³⁸

There are three parts to my analysis: the demands, the action, and the response. In the first section, I look at the list of demands that the Black Justice League wrote and circulated via social

media, primarily through a change.org website. Then I examine the walk-out on November 18, 2015 and the subsequent thirty-two-hour sit-in at Nassau Hall. I conduct my analysis with the full awareness that the BJL is not representative of all Black students on the Princeton campus, nor am I suggesting that the BJL is a voice for all students of color on that campus. I acknowledge the danger of conflating the BJL's values, activities and thoughts as emblematic of a larger population of students of color. My intention in examining the two BJL documents is motivated by a desire to analyze the original source of recent media attention. The purpose of this section is therefore not to essentialize student of color activism in Princeton University, but rather to understand what the BJL is articulating as racial justice and how they pursue their aims by way of civil disobedience.

In this section, I analyze the place of civil disobedience in academia. I examine how those who participated in the walk-out or the sit-in challenged the rhetoric of diversity by asking who, and which bodies, are able to be participants, be seen, or be protected in this action. In doing so, I wish to examine critically the impact of student actions that can be categorized as forms of civil disobedience in academic places. Last, I shift to an analysis of responses both by the administration and by an opposing student group, the Princeton Open Campus Coalition (POCC), which evoke concepts such as "freedom of speech" and equality in order to delegitimize the arguments put forth by the BJL. I argue that, in positing the idea that all individuals have an equal stake in a situation, those who advocate this argument both intentionally and unintentionally fail to recognize the meaning behind the demands of Black Justice League.

"We here. We been here. We ain't leavin'. We are loved."

At 11:30am on November 18, 2015, 252 Princeton undergraduates walked out of ongoing classes and convened in front of Nassau Hall. A few minutes later, student leaders of the BJL read their list of demands to the crowd. Then, the BJL members and students participating in the walk-

out marched into President Eisgruber's office chanting: "We here. We been here. We ain't leavin'. We are loved."³⁹

The chant points to two things. One is that Black students are not only "here" but have also "been here," a reminder that serves to situate Black presence in campus life as not just recent, but also historical.⁴⁰ A second is that the chant situates Black affirmation and love as the core of the protests. It is a refusal to be subsumed, forgotten, or ignored in a predominantly white institution.

This refusal to go along with institutional codes of speech, language and dialogue is my focus in this section. I analyze the list of demands, the legacy of Woodrow Wilson, and how BJL members utilize their anger and action as a form of resistance. In doing so, I seek to create a context grounded in the BJL members' demands, which will prove to be a foundation for my later sections.

#OccupyNassau: The List of Demands

The list of demands, titled "#OccupyNassau Meet Black Student's Demands," has been published on an online petition-signing platform named "change.org" and accredited to "Black Justice League at Princeton University." Of its eight paragraphs, three present demands, each one opening with two words, "WE DEMAND." As of May 1, 2016, the petition had been signed by 1057 supporters.⁴¹

The petition demands three items: 1) the public acknowledgement of the racist legacy of Woodrow Wilson by the university, 2) mandatory cultural competency training for faculty and staff, and 3) the creation of a cultural space dedicated specifically to Black students on campus. The document begins:

The document begins:

We, Black Justice League, a group of concerned students who formed in November 2014, are exhausted by our constant communications with administration, and on November 18, 2015, announced we would sit in until those demands were signed by the president, indicating his support.

The personal plural pronoun “we” makes it explicitly clear that the list of demands is representative of a group, not an individual. However, the “we” in the document does not remain static. BJL writes in the fifth paragraph that “[t]hese are [the] demands from Black students at Princeton who, in the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, are ‘sick and tired of being sick and tired.’” Here, the “we” shifts from the “Black Justice League” as the document reads in the very first sentence of the demands, to Black students at Princeton. The BJL is therefore not only establishing their demands as an organization, but aspiring to represent a larger population of Black students at Princeton. By asserting a “we,” the Black Justice League resists the pluralistic vision of diversity that posits difference as individual-based. Instead, BJL attests to the *institutional failure* to support a *group* of students--Black students--by using the word “we” that is unified under a common struggle. Further, the phrase “a group of concerned students” that “we” is explained as alluding to Concerned Student 1950, the Black activist group at University of Missouri that elicited nationwide attention after successfully organizing a series of protests and sit-ins. Using a quotation from Hamer, a prominent Civil Rights leader, indicates that the Black Justice League situates their actions as informed by the Civil Rights movement. They are claiming that the language of the Civil Rights leaders such as Hamer is still relevant to this day.

In an open letter published in December 2015, BJL writes that

[W]e have demanded that the University not just remove his name but also take responsibility for its history by formally recognizing Woodrow Wilson's racist legacy in perpetuity, either with a plaque or with a web page... This is an opportunity for Princeton to act not only in accordance with its peer institutions who are already taking corrective action but to take the lead in a momentous and unprecedented way.⁴²

The emphasis on "public" acknowledgement therefore serves two purposes: that a "public" acknowledgement is necessary to right the wrongs of Princeton University, and that this acknowledgement creates the opportunity for peer institutions to perceive Princeton University as being at the forefront of recognizing racist legacies upon which all U.S. universities are built. Indeed, as an Ivy League institution, the potential symbolism behind Princeton University's public acknowledgement cannot be understated.

Remembering Woodrow Wilson

Though it is not within the scope of my paper to thoroughly discuss Woodrow Wilson's complex legacy and his relationship with Princeton University, the fact that he has supported racist policies and espoused imperialist views remains. In the book *Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America*, Eric S. Yellin argues that, during Wilson's presidency, Black federal workers were displaced through Wilson's policies by physical segregation in their work offices and also disproportionately denied opportunity and dignity, capping their economic and social mobility-- an act that had reverberating consequences for decades to come. Yellin argues, "The goal of Wilsonian discrimination was not just racial separation but the limitation of black people to a controlled and exploitable class of laborers."⁴³ For Wilson, segregation was "simply a managerial matter, an essential but nonpartisan ingredient of democratic government."⁴⁴

Further, Wilson was able to remain in the eyes of the public as a good leader by strategically removing himself-- his personal prejudice or politics-- from the realities of the policies he implemented. Wilson appeared to care deeply for Black Americans, while simultaneously believing that Black political power was untenable.⁴⁵ For instance, Wilson suggested the rhetoric of *tolerance* which emphasized white American values of progressive moral sophistication: “the American people, as a whole, sincerely desire and wish to support, in every way they can, the advancement of the Negro race in America.”⁴⁶ As such, Wilson’s view of tolerance was a cold and distant inclusion that actually indicated his belief that Blacks in the United States were not fully American and did not belong.⁴⁷

This contradictory image of Wilson is revealed not only in his domestic policies, but also in his stance on foreign relations. Wilson’s imperialist policies are harder to recognize as malignant because they employ the rhetoric of democracy. In his Eighth Annual Message, Woodrow Wilson tells the Congress, “This is the time of all others when Democracy should prove its purity and its spiritual power to prevail. It is surely the *manifest destiny* of the United States to lead in the attempt to make this spirit prevail.”⁴⁸ While the term “manifest destiny” was first coined in 1845 by John Louis O’Sullivan to mean the self-appointed mission of the United States to expand territorially, Woodrow Wilson used this term to mean the “providentially assigned role of the United States to lead the world to new and better things.”⁴⁹ Coupling national superiority with romantic nationalism, manifest destiny is the conviction that American territorial expansion was not only inevitable, but also a responsibility-- that it was America’s special calling and mission to serve as a moral leader of the world.⁵⁰ Indeed, when Wilson says “America has lifted high the light which will shine unto all generations and guide the feet of mankind to the goal of justice and liberty and peace,” he is upholding the United States as morally responsible to manage humankind-- a statement that obscures the naming of imperialism because it is under the “just” flag of democracy.⁵¹ During his

term, Wilson sent U.S. military forces to Mexico, and authorized armed interventions in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In contrast, Wilson promoted “moral diplomacy,” in which support is only given to other nations that have similar moral values as the giving country.⁵² Describing his policies as “moral diplomacy” allowed Wilson to oppose imperialism in principle while simultaneously maintaining imperialist policies. In a speech to a graduating class of the Naval Academy, Wilson described his interventions in Haiti and the Dominican Republic as not “instruments of aggression,” but rather as “instruments of civilization.”⁵³ If U.S. interventions are not seen as violent acts of imperialism, but rather as the moral duties of the United States to spread “democracy,” then it is hardly surprising that Wilson’s policies were hard to name as imperialist acts. United States intervention abroad, then, can be justified under any rubric so as long as it is under the name of democracy.

What is therefore necessary is to consider Wilson’s legacy beyond the simplified binaries of good/bad acts that the media portrays. In “Princeton Students Take Over President’s Office, Demand Erasure Of Woodrow Wilson,” Blake Neff writes that “like all of us, [Wilson] was a man of his own time, and he should be judged accordingly... Woodrow Wilson is almost universally regarded as one of the greatest presidents in Princeton’s history and, *despite his serious shortcomings*, one of the greatest presidents our nation has ever known.”⁵⁴ In the article, Neff discloses Wilson’s flaws, but the acknowledgement of these “shortcomings” serves only for Neff to dismiss them. In other words, Neff uses the acknowledgement as a speech act: so as long as he admits that Wilson had flaws, Neff is able to decide ultimately that Wilson was a great president. In encouraging us to judge Wilson as a “man of his own time,” Neff asks the present day reader to *forgive* Wilson’s violent acts by considering him relative to the racist time period he grew up in.

Neff’s call did anything but derail the conversation around Wilson. Asking BJL members to consider Wilson’s politics relative to the environment around him is saying that he is the lesser of his

contemporary evils, as if the fact that Wilson was a little-less-racist than his peers excuses him from being labeled a racist. It does not justify his actions. What is ironic about Neff's call to think about Wilson in a composite-- thinking about both his bad and his good in judging his character-- is exactly what BJJL members are calling for. They are disrupting the unquestioned veneration of Wilson by pointing out that his oppressive views *must* be taken into account when his name is institutionally affiliated.

From Naming White Ignorance to Affirming Blackness

In addition to the public acknowledgement by the University, BJJL also demands that “steps be made to rename Wilson residential college, the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy and International Affairs, and any other building named after him... [and] the mural of Wilson to be removed from the Wilcox dining hall.”⁵⁵ Yet, BJJL also states at the end of its first demand that “a name change does not dismantle racism, but... the way we lionize legacies set precedents.”⁵⁶ This passage indicates that the BJJL clearly understands what they are demanding. The public acknowledgement of Wilson's legacies on campus and the removal of his name from institutional spaces are not in and of themselves radical tools to “dismantle racism.” They are instead manifestations of larger systems of power. The racist and imperialist policies of Woodrow Wilson become visible and remain symbolized in institutional spaces, both tangibly, in the name of schools and buildings, and also intangibly, through the affiliation of his name with Princeton University.

To state his legacy as racist and imperialist is, in the eyes of his supporters, an act of defacement to the otherwise laudatory image of Wilson. This media spotlight attracted by the BJJL's demands not only draws more investigation into the list of demands by the general public, but also forces Princeton University to respond, to act. If national newspapers create headlines about the

BJL's list of demands, then Princeton University is pressured to issue a response, any response at all that simultaneously upholds its own institutional values and appears to acknowledge the BJL.

The demand for the removal of Wilson's name in this instance is not the all too easily essentialized story of college students being overly politically correct. Rather, BJL's demand calls for the recognition of Wilson's legacy *as* racist, and subsequently to condemn his actions and his politics by refusing to give Wilson the institutional space to supposedly "honor" his role. In rejecting the presence of Wilson's name in the institution, BJL disrupts the status quo of glorifying powerful men who perpetuate imperialist actions both domestically and abroad by pushing for accountability by the University to recognize not merely Wilson's legacy, but Wilson's *racist* legacy.

Compared to the preceding demand, which focused on institutional spaces and the venerating of racist white men in the history of Princeton University, in their second demand BJL focuses on programming changes that will influence the future of undergraduate education for incoming students: the demand is for "cultural competency training for all staff and faculty" which was previously "voted down on the grounds of trespassing freedom of speech." This demand reveals BJL's call for campus climate changes through distribution requirements and faculty/staff political awareness training. While their first demand focuses on addressing how racist thought, as embodied by Woodrow Wilson, is integrated into the campus through institutional veneration, the second demand shifts to a focus on the present. The support of Black students on campus depends upon the understanding of faculty, staff and other peers of structural oppression and "systems of privilege." In order to create the campus climate that is as "inclusive" as "Many Voices, One Future" claims the university to be, BJL insists upon concrete proposals rather than a vague celebration of "inclusivity," which doesn't propose any solutions, just a change in perception. The Black Justice League is thus proposing a pathway to institutionally enact these changes.

In their final and third demand, BJL calls for the creation of a “cultural space on campus dedicated specifically to Black students.” They clarify later that the “naming of this space should be at the student's’ [sic] discretion in order to avoid naming it after a white benefactor or person with bigoted beliefs, as evidenced by the naming of Stanhope Hall.” Unlike the demand for classes “on the history of marginalized people” to be a part of distribution requirements, BJL here shifts their demands from a larger umbrella group of “marginalized people” to a specific need for “Black students” on campus. Indeed, the term “marginalized people” includes a range of identities and populations. Women, queer, students of color, low-income, first generation, undocumented, transgender or non-binary students can be categorized as “marginalized people.” A center for “marginalized people” would be harder to imagine and create because needs of marginalized people are not homogenous. By centering their Black identities in the very last demand, they refuse to be subsumed under the umbrella term “marginalized people,” which cannot specifically address their needs as *Black* students.

What is worth noting is the structure of this list of demands. In the first paragraph, BJL discusses how crucial it is to interrupt the norm-- the norm, that is, of venerating white men in institutional spaces, including well known and celebrated men such as Woodrow Wilson. In the second, BJL emphasizes the necessity of educating faculty, staff, and peers about structures of privilege, which also impacts the first goal of resisting the status quo. In the final paragraph, BJL emphasizes Blackness and the need for a space specifically for Black students. Hence, the demands move from calling for anti-racist practices by the University, to calling for anti-oppression education for people within the university, to making pro-Black statements that affirm, prioritize and center Black students at the core of their demands. This structure is strategic and not coincidental. Addressing the need for a Black-specific cultural space *and* critiquing white supremacy within the institution underscore that BJL’s actions, and the larger movement of Black students demanding

racial justice across U.S. universities, are not a one-dimensional struggle in which they point out how institutions have failed to support them as Black students, but rather a multifaceted struggle that first and foremost affirms Black students at its center.

Even in an institution that has continued to push back against Black presence in the academy, BJL members take up space by demanding a Black specific space that celebrates their presence in their list of demands.

Translating Anger to Action

Regardless of what the student and administrative responses to BJL's list of demands were, it is most important to recognize what writing that list of demands and mobilizing around the document accomplished. Audre Lorde, a Black lesbian poet, in her essay "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" emphasizes the significance of speaking and of breaking silences:

For to survive in the mouth of this dragon we call america [sic], we have had to learn this first and most vital lesson-- that we were never meant to survive. Not as human beings... And that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength. Because the machine will try to grind you into dust anyway, whether or not we speak. We can sit in our corners mute forever while our sisters and our selves are wasted, while our children are distorted and destroyed, while our earth is poisoned; we can sit in our safe corners mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid.⁵⁷

What must therefore be stressed is that BJL, through the act of speaking itself, has already resisted the institutional expectation to keep quiet. "Many Voices, One Future," has made it clear that one's "voice" is prioritized only insofar as it contributes cultural and individual difference in a positive

manner. The BJL, however, set up their own terms under which this act of speaking happened. After multiple conversations, which were the preferred and perhaps *only* method of dialogue that the institution authorized, BJL members decided to speak out beyond and outside the discursive framework that Princeton's culture set up for them. As Lorde accurately points out, regardless of whether or not BJL members speak out, the institution will continue to "grind [them] into dust anyway... and [they] will still be no less afraid." It is imperative to recognize this act of speech as an act of resistance itself.

Ultimately, whether or not the BJL was successful in its list of demands is irrelevant. What matters is that in contrast to the happy words of "Many Voices, One Future," that assumed individuals had the responsibility to be more tolerant of difference, BJL offered *concrete* steps to create a vision of the University in which they would hope to be. Unlike the Timeline that selectively highlighted certain events, particularly celebratory events over more reproachful ones, the list of demands allowed the opportunity for Princeton University to start examining its complicity in upholding structures of oppression-- not by censoring the shameful past, but rather by demanding answers that force people to reckon with the role of Wilson in the institution, including his racist and imperialist views.

Black Bodies in Space: Belongings, Surveillance and the Politics of Fear

Out of the 1300 invited, 252 people clicked the button "going," and 107 clicked "interested" in the Facebook event "WALKOUT + SPEAKOUT" organized by the Black Justice League.⁵⁸ Originally, they had planned on holding the sit-in from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, to coincide with the building's working hours. When a university administrator approached them at 5:00 pm, she presented them with a decision: stay and face disciplinary action, or leave immediately and face no disciplinary actions but with the caveat that they would not be able to come back the following

morning.⁵⁹ Approximately forty people decided to stay, resulting in a thirty-two-hour sit-in.

According to an update on the petition that included the list of demands, other students sat outside the building.⁶⁰

In this section, I question what it means for BJL members and Black student protestors to occupy a space as a form of civil disobedience. I first examine the historical significance of Nassau Hall, then I discuss the import of surveillance and safety during the sit-in. In doing so, I seek to elucidate the differing relationships to space that the student “body” has.

Henry David Thoreau, in the seminal essay “Civil Disobedience,” writes, “If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go... but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine.” The decision of members of the BJL to sit-in at Nassau Hall was an act of civil disobedience because they intentionally chose to “break the law,” in this case not codified legally, but a socially understood form of behavior.

My analysis of the spatial environment of Nassau Hall is informed by feminist conceptualizations of space. Feminist scholars have long pushed for the necessity to question space critically as a function of maintaining, reproducing, or disrupting structures of power. Feminist geographers in particular have deconstructed the common view that space is simply an empty void that only acquires content or meaning through its relationship with other material or abstract things. The purpose of feminist geography, as outlined by Linda McDowell is “to investigate, make visible and challenge the relationships between gender divisions and spatial divisions, to uncover their mutual constitution and problematize their apparent naturalness.”⁶¹

At the core of feminist scholarship on space has been its claim that space and gender are interconnected with each other. For instance, Seemanthini Niranjana, writing about ethnography, femininity, body, and space, summarizes: “[S]pace is not just physical form that may then be linked

up with social structure but is very much the stuff of which social life is made.”⁶² Space not only reveals how gendered bodies behave differently in the place they occupy, but also *creates* gendered behavior through its inscription on or engagement with bodies.⁶³ By critically examining space as an focus of study, feminist scholars have laid out the foundations to see space as a form of power that can be, and should be, interrogated. Therefore, while my analysis is not explicitly linking *gender* and space, the foundations of feminist scholarship has given way for me to question the centrality of space in my analysis.

The Historical Significance of Nassau Hall

According to the Facebook page event, the BJJ called for their peers to “join hundreds of university students across the world in a national walkout day to confront and challenge institutional racism and systemic inequality. Walk out of your class at 11:30 AM and convene in front of Nassau Hall.”⁶⁴ As the President's Office is located within Nassau Hall, the directions to meet there were strategic. But Nassau Hall is significant for additional reasons. Built in 1756, Nassau Hall has endured multiple fires, war and numerous renovations. Woodrow Wilson delivered his famous speech “Princeton in the Service of the Nation” that inspired the University’s unofficial motto, “In ‘Princeton in the nation's service and in the service of all nations.” Nassau Hall was, for four months in 1783, also the nation’s capital.⁶⁵ According to a blog post on the architecture of the building, Nassau Hall, despite “the stones [being] a bit weathered, the brass a bit dull, and the wood a bit worn ... continues to stand as a symbol of determination, perseverance, and freedom.”⁶⁶ Therefore, Nassau Hall is not merely an old building that houses administrative offices, including the President’s Office. It is also a symbol of Princeton that has both endured and embodied values of Princeton University.

The Black Justice League's decision to "sit-in" --to occupy a space for an indefinite amount of time until the President agreed to sign the demands--at Nassau Hall thus cannot be separated from the implications of what the building represents. While Nassau Hall is seen as a "symbol of determination, perseverance, and freedom," Princeton University as an *institution* of higher learning is not innocent in its claims of inclusion. For instance, Woodrow Wilson, in the very speech that he made at Nassau Hall, remarked that "it is the duty of an institution of learning set in the midst of a free population and amidst signs of social change, not merely to implant a sense of duty, but to illuminate duty by every lesson that can be drawn out of the past."⁶⁷ However, if Wilson claimed that we must interrogate the past and witness its moral lessons, then perhaps we must first question what his definition of the past is. In a letter discussing admission of black students, Wilson is infamously known for writing, "The whole temper and tradition of the place are such that no Negro has ever applied, and it seems extremely unlikely that the question will ever assume a practical form."⁶⁸ That Wilson advocates for institutions of higher learning to draw lessons from the past and yet simultaneously upholds segregationist policies is not a contradiction or a paradox; it is the reproduction of racist sentiments similar to "separate but equal" policies. Such policies conveniently allow whites to reap the benefits of a racially ordered world whilst creating the *appearance* of desiring a world free of racism. Thus, when BJL members and other supporters continued to sit-in the President's office for thirty-two hours, they were illuminating the hypocritical claims of the university: that the administration, through initiatives like "Many Voices, One Future," could effortlessly promote the "inclusivity" of the campus, and nonetheless continue to ignore calls for more support that necessitated the creation of the list of demands and the sit-in to happen in the first place. I do not write "effortless" out of spite to discount the work that diversity practitioners and staff have put in. But to what extent can a colorful website implemented in 2014 *redress* the centuries of racist policies that have historically been at the foundation of Princeton University?

Celebrating diversity and the subsequent “happy talk” of inclusivity can only be effective and true if the administration has actually addressed racism on campus seriously.

To sit in a building for thirty-two hours, after working hours long after the building has been closed, is a direct rejection of Wilson’s vision of the university in which no Black students were to be admitted. Black students unapologetically taking up space in a campus that historically did not desire their presence is an act of resistance that threatens the supposedly happy image of the “inclusive campus” that Princeton imagines itself to be.

“Public Safety” in Private Spaces

“You should anticipate that there could be disciplinary consequences when students occupy private space,” Kathleen Deignan, the Dean of Students, told protesters when the 5:00pm closing hour approached. “If you do not leave, then the University will have ODUS (Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students) staff and Public Safety staff here in the building, but that does not mean that you will not be in violation of University Regulations,” she continued.⁶⁹ In this moment, Deignan established her position as a person of authority. She reminded and asserted her power as an administrator of the university by issuing a *threat* of disciplinary action.

What does a threat intended to summon fear do? Sara Ahmed, writing about the relationship between spatiality and mobility for different bodies, comments that “[f]ear involves shrinking the body, it restricts the body’s mobility precisely insofar as it seems to prepare the body for flight. Such shrinkage is significant: fear works to contain some bodies such that *they take up less space*”⁷⁰ The threat of disciplinary action is an evocation of fear: Deignan relied upon the threat of fear in order to prompt students into leaving--into taking up less space. Deignan’s threat, put another way, is a reminder to BJL members that they do not belong at Princeton University.

Yet, Deignan's threat of disciplinary action and her attempt to police the protestors is denied for two reasons. One is that students decided to stay, thereby rejecting Deignan's supposed power to instill fear amongst the protestors. More remarkably, they did not recognize disciplinary action as a threat of which to be fearful. In a post published in *Nassau Weekly*, a student-run publication, author Alexandria Robinson recounts that the decision to continue the sit-in was not necessarily a fear of disciplinary action, but a fear that an entire movement would be prematurely ended. Fear that everything a group had worked for would not even see the light of a second day."⁷¹ Robinson, a Black student, thus rejects Deignan's threat by not even recognizing it as threatening. This refusal to recognize the threat of disciplinary action is also a refusal to recognize Deignan's power as an authority figure. Robinson therefore disturbs the supposedly unquestioned authority of Deignan by denying her the assumed functions of fear-- for bodies to take up less space.

The threat of disciplinary actions that Deignan imposes upon the protestors is not only dependent on her authority as a Dean of Students, but also on her ability to label Nassau Hall as a "private space." How different would Deignan's warning be, then, if students were protesting in a "public space"? Despite the associations in other contexts of "private space" as safe space, Deignan's designation of Nassau Hall as a private space results from a desire to control and to police: if a space is "private," then students are subject to the rules and regulations of the owner of the "private space."

On the other hand, the administration, through Kathleen Deignan, exercised their control precisely by extending surveillance into the so-called "private space." Because the student protestors responded to Deignan's ultimatum by staying, the administration called Public Safety officers. Public Safety's mission is to "enhance the living, learning and working experience at Princeton University by protecting life, maintaining order and safeguarding property."⁷² Michel Foucault comments that disciplinary power is "exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes on those whom

it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility... It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able to always be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.”⁷³ The presence of Public Safety at the sit-in cannot simply be explained as “protecting life, maintaining order and safeguarding property,” since the very act of fulfilling these roles is predicated upon their watchful eye of Black students occupying the President's Office. Public Safety therefore extends the power of being constantly surveilled, constantly policed from the public into a space that has been dictated as “private.”

If the security officers are to call themselves “Public Safety,” then it is likewise important to question whose ideas of “Public” Public Safety serves and whose needs and safeties are legitimately seen as needs and safeties. Perhaps it is not even a question of “who is” but rather “who is not.” The writers of the petition in which the list of demands were circulated online wrote afterward that “Public Safety protected the building, and left the students who slept outside without protection.”⁷⁴ That Public Safety chose to protect an inanimate object, a building, over Black students inside the building and students camping outside the building is indicative of the fact that Black life is not as protected as a building is, or that Black life is not even seen as life, as worthy of protection, at all.

Black life is generally not protected, and that is a fact that even institutions cannot deny. The Black Lives Matter movement emerged out of a need to specifically state that Black lives matter, because Black life is not protected in this country. If Black life were protected in the first place, then there would be no need for a Black Lives Matter movement. When students outside the building chanted lines like “No justice, no peace,” and “We will not be disciplined, we will be loved,” Black students, like their list of demands, center their Blackness. In the process, they offer a glimmer of hope, an unrelenting act of faith to imagine a better place in an institution that constantly denies them their humanity.

Civility, Colorblindness and Conversations: An Imagined Inclusivity

While most of my previous analysis has addressed BJL demands and actions, I now shift to an analysis of responses both by student groups and by the administration. Specifically, I look at two elements: first, the existence and purpose of Princeton Open Campus Coalition (POCC), a student group that emerged primarily to oppose the demands of the BJL. I examine how POCC utilizes the rhetorics of diversity and “freedom of speech” emerge to oppose the anti-racist viewpoint of the BJL. Though some may see the BJL and POCC’s aims to be the same, I argue that POCC’s tactics are seen as preferable because the POCC’s arguments do not require active and intentional action by the student body or the administration. Second, I look at how calls for “conversation” and “dialogue” by proponents of POCC and the administration obscure historical injustices and power dynamics that are therefore central to the situation. In both of these cases, the discourse of equality and freedom of speech are used to create the appearance of a just, fair and reasonable response to the demands and actions of the BJL and its supporters. In positing the idea that all individuals have an equal and same stake in a situation, I argue that those who advocate this view both intentionally and unintentionally fail to recognize the demands of the Black Justice League despite using similar discourses of the left.

Open for Whom? Princeton Open Campus Coalition

On its Facebook page, the POCC posted its first status on November 23, 2015, declaring that “[w]e, undergraduate students of Princeton University, have established the Princeton Open Campus Coalition to protect diversity of thought and the right of all students to advance their academic and personal convictions in a manner free from intimidation.”⁷⁵ In particular, I focus on the letter, published on the POCC Facebook page, in which POCC members wrote to President Eisgruber regarding the BJL’s actions. In that letter, POCC members utilizes the discourse of the

left, using diction such as “equality” “freedom” “diversity” and “rights.” The purpose of my focus on POCC is to see how undergraduate students at Princeton have organized against the Black Justice League and their demands.

To begin, the name Princeton Open Campus Coalition deserves interrogation. The word “open” conjures several meanings-- open in terms of access (not closed), of being exposed (not covered), of being frank (not concealed). The word “open” also is associated with open-mindedness or open-arms. To use “open” in its organizational name is to associate the coalition with a positive ideal, of being vulnerable, or approachable, but the use of “open” is also a strategy to conceptualize the organization as being what it intends to criticize- being closed-minded, biased, or dishonest. By positing itself as “open,” the POCC indirectly implies that what is happening on campus is not open. That there is a need for an organization to “protect diversity of thought... in a manner free from intimidation” assumes that diversity of thought is *not* protected and that protestors are intimidating some students.

The POCC juxtaposes the idea of “intimidation” with “academic freedom” by asserting that those who “intimidate” or “bully” people with “different viewpoints” are infringing upon their and the institution’s “academic freedom”: “To adopt these tactics [of civil disobedience] while such procedures for debate and reform are in place is to come dangerously close to the line dividing demonstration from intimidation. We, the Princeton Open Campus Coalition, refuse to let our peers be intimidated or bullied into silence on these--or any--important matter.”⁷⁶ Though they specifically point out the sit-in as an act of civil disobedience, the letter never mentions Black Justice League. Instead, they label BJL members and their supporters as merely “protesters.” By labeling the “protesters” tactics as “intimidation” or “bullying,” the POCC draws upon the stereotype of Black people as being aggressive and angry. If some of the protestors are BJL members, then the very fact that they could be labeled as using intimidation stems from the stereotype of black people as being

aggressive. In contrast, POCC members promote an image of themselves as righteous champions and defenders of “academic freedom” by stating that “[un]like their counterparts at other universities, Princeton undergraduates opposed to the curtailment of academic freedom refuse to remain silent out of fear of being slandered.”⁷⁷ Consequently, by associating BJL members and their tactics with the idea of “intimidation,” POCC is able to define its position as one that does *not* use intimidation, but rather defends academic freedom. In that way, POCC creates a dichotomy of censorship versus academic freedom. By nature binaries leave no space beyond the two categories, meaning that it is impossible for arguments to be anything but *either* academic freedom *or* censorship.

The concept of “academic freedom” is closely aligned with the idea of “civility” in the letter. This is a harmful correlation to make because any dialogue that is not considered to be “civil” will thus be seen as an attack on academic freedom. For instance, the Princeton Open Campus Coalition write: “We will not occupy your office, and, though we respectfully request a minimum of an hour of your time, we will only stay for as long as you wish. We will conduct ourselves *in the civil manner* that it is our hope to maintain and reinforce as the norm at Princeton.”⁷⁸ By describing their behavior as a “civil manner,” they imply that those who did occupy the office, namely, the Black Justice League, are not civil. Moreover, the POCC associates intellectualism with civility by stating that they are concerned about “preserving an intellectual culture in which all members of the Princeton community feel free to engage in civil discussion.”⁷⁹ This allows the POCC to define the discursive framework regarding the protests as an “either/or” proposition: either engage in civil discussion, and be part of an intellectual culture, or use “intimidation” to “curtail academic freedom.” If civil discussion provides the terms by which “intellectual culture” is measured, then anything that anyone deems not civil is not intellectual culture, and therefore against Princeton’s values as an institution of higher learning.⁸⁰

This stance is enabled by the lack of clarity regarding how civility is defined or even who is able to define what constitutes civil language. Nirmal Puwar writes about the “imperial legitimate language,” expanding upon Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “legitimate language.” For Bourdieu, the “legitimate language” functions to create class distinctions that preserve the power of the upper class to be the “voice of reason.”⁸¹ Nirmal Puwar extends Bourdieu’s theory to discuss it in a framework of race. The imperial legitimate language “enables racialised bodies to become ‘honourable’ ‘civilised’ humans... As an instrument of the governance of ‘civility,’ the acquisition of the imperial/legitimate language is able to take racialised bodies through a passage of rites to becoming honourable human beings.”⁸² Puwar’s argument is useful because it accurately points to the validation of personhood in the successful use of the imperial language. Unlike Bourdieu who interprets the legitimate language as a form of categorization based on social class, Puwar asserts that the acquisition of imperial language allows one to be seen as *human*, that humanity is bestowed upon the racialised body through the label of “civility”. Furthermore, the fact that Black and otherwise non-white people have historically been seen as “primitive” or “backward” should not be overlooked. When POCC calls for their fellow students, particularly the Black members of BJL, to engage in “civil discussion,” they ignore the sociopolitical and historical powers that constitute what “civility” does. “Civility” marks the status and superiority that distinguishes European and western cultures from the rest of the world.⁸³

The call for “civility” also disregards the reality that BJL members have already attempted to use what POCC members call “procedures for debate and reform.”⁸⁴ After “constantly” meeting with administrators, the BJL were “exhausted,” which prompted them to write the list of demands. In an interview by Tammy Tseng on the blogpost “At ‘Black Activism and Consciousness’ Teach-In, Students and Alumni Discuss Campus Issues” published on December 15, 2015 in *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Wilglory Tanjong is quoted as saying, “But what people don’t understand though is we did

go about these bureaucratic pathways, and we had many, many meetings ... with so many administrators until we got to the point that they would not listen to us; we had to sit in Nassau Hall to be radical.”

To expect marginalized peoples to present their arguments in a meaningful way, in the definition of what constitutes a “conversation” or “dialogue” in accordance with university rules, wades into the dangerous territories of tone-policing. Tone-policing is a tactic used to divert attention from an argument by pointing out *how* it is being said rather than acknowledging the content of *what* is being said. If one does not present an argument in a way seen as rational, logical, or objective to the antagonist, then the argument itself is not deemed worthy of being seen as legitimate. Feminists have pointed out that the very act of defining of what is or is not a “legitimate” argument stems from a long history of devaluing women’s arguments as too “emotional,” too “angry” and thus not deserving of being heard. In her discussion of the fantasy figure of the angry Black woman, Sara Ahmed comments that “[r]easonable thoughtful arguments are dismissed as anger...which makes you angry, such that your response becomes read as the confirmation of evidence that you are not only angry but also unreasonable!”⁸⁵ The figure of the angry Black person functions in POCC’s letter to create a perception of themselves as what the intimidating BJL members are not. If POCC can argue that BJL members use intimidating tactics, then the POCC can delegitimize their own arguments by reframing the BJL members’ anger and frustration as “bullying” and “abuse.”

The POCC’s asserted contrast to BJL’s “intimidating” tactics serves to shape the POCC’s own identity: the POCC comes into existence and into meaning because of what they are *not* in relation to BJL. Indeed, the fact that POCC’s Facebook page appeared online less than a week after the BJL’s list of demands, proves not only that POCC’s existence is reactionary but also that the reaction is to a group of Black radical students. That the BJL is seen as a threat to Princeton’s

“intellectual mission” suggests that the presence, existence, and actions of BJL undermine the foundation of white supremacy on which the institution is built.

Raceless Sameness

The call for “civil discussion” is not only from the POCC, but also has been sounded by the Princeton administration. President Eisgruber sent a message to University students, faculty, alumni and staff on November 22, 2015, three days after the sit-in, addressing “campus climate”:

Making further progress will require compassion, commitment, and imagination. It will also require that *we discuss difficult topics civilly and with mutual respect*. To be an inclusive community we must treat one another with respect even when we disagree vigorously about topics that matter deeply. When I spoke to the students who occupied Nassau Hall, I insisted that we would consider carefully the issues that troubled them, but that we would do so through *appropriate University processes* — processes that allow for full and fair input from the *entire* University community.⁸⁶

Eisgruber’s insistence “civility,” presents “civility” as though it were an institutionalized standard. If an argument is deemed not “civil,” then that argument is placed outside of the discursive parameters of what the University allows. The POCC’s calls for civility thus become the *institutional*, and not just the organizational, norm by which all other arguments are measured. Eisgruber further institutionalizes how arguments are evaluated by pushing them to be channeled through “appropriate” processes in order to be considered an argument within the “conversation” in the first place. Similar to the rhetoric in “Many Voices, One Future,” in which all people are considered equally “diverse,” the definition of this “appropriate” university process is one that presumably allows for *everyone* to contribute.

Indeed, when Eisgruber writes that “[w]e must commit ourselves to make this University a place where students from all backgrounds feel respected and valued,” he effectively erases recognition of *racial* difference, one that BJL explicitly demanded, replacing it with a mask of equality that, at face value, appears harmless. Yet, this statement in which students from all backgrounds are respected relies on a rhetoric of colorblindness. A colorblind argument is harmful, and particularly pervasive, because it is seemingly benign. In *The Racial State*, Theo Goldberg defines colorblindness as:

the neoliberal attempt to go beyond—without (fully) coming to terms with—racial histories and their accompanying racist inequalities and inequities; to mediate racially classed and gendered distinctions to which those histories have given rise without reference to the racial terms of those distinctions; to transform, via the negating dialectic of denial and ignoring, racially marked social orders into racially erased ones.⁸⁷

Eisgruber constructs a colorblind approach by writing “students from all backgrounds” instead of recognizing how students of color, especially Black students, have a different stake in this situation. If race *doesn’t matter*, as Goldberg points out, because it is “erased,” then it is easier to claim that Princeton, as an institution, has “go[ne] beyond” racism. In other words, a colorblind approach creates the conditions to imagine a “post-racial world.” Rather than name specific racial differences and the accompanying implications for who is able to speak, Eisgruber instead opts for a vague reference to cultural backgrounds.

So what then, is the effectiveness of conversations? In the article “The Logic of Whiteness,” Ronald A. Kuykendall emphasizes the inadequacy of discussion and arguments:

What is clear is that we are not going to talk our way out of racism and police violence against people of color. Racism will never be overcome by arguments at the round table. I believe that conviction by argument and reasoning is only possible when it is backed up by overwhelming physical force — a matching of power, not intellects. Persuasion, through dialogue, is unrealistic when you are addressing white privilege and white hegemony, in order to induce whites to abandon their privileged positions ... Because whiteness is a form of discourse, and antidialogism is a component of that discourse, antidialogism creates a boundary that excludes and constrains communication, — what can and cannot be said, of who can and cannot speak, who must be silent, and whose utterances are unworthy of attention.⁸⁸

For Kuykendall, persuasion, logic, and other similar tools of argumentation are ultimately incapable of dismantling white supremacy because whiteness determines the definitions of dialogue. In Eisgruber's case, he has already dictated what dialogue can be by dictating the standard by which an argument is considered an argument worth considering.

Therefore, in a response to demands that ask for Princeton's senior administrators to acknowledge publicly how they have failed to support Black students on campus, Eisgruber imagines a colorblind, raceless "conversation" that is mediated through institutionally determined "appropriate" processes. What is sadly ironic about Eisgruber's response is that it is another call for conversation when the conditions that necessitated the demands focused on the inability of prior conversations to produce any change. Asanni York, a Black junior, remarked, "We've been having conversations for years, though. I'm tired of having conversations. It's time to have some wheels move."⁸⁹ In their list of demands, the Black Justice League points out that constant communication with administrators left them "exhausted." That Eisgruber appeals to have further conversations,

discussions, and dialogues when such conversations did not address the demands of BJL in the past is another tactic of the administration to placate and muffle Black students' call for institutional accountability. It is, simply put, another example of how student protests that demand change become absorbed back into, watered down by, the very institutions that ultimately leave students in an endless cycle--with the intention of keeping them exhausted.

Adding Darker Faces

"I'm a little bit torn," said Takim Williams, a Black senior, to an interviewer, "My race has never been a disadvantage to me--at least that's how I view it so I haven't had the same visceral reaction."⁹⁰ Williams's comments are a desirable institutional answer. Institutions seek a kind of "difference" that is different enough, but not so different that it disrupts our image of ourselves. This institutional image is predicated on the language of diversity, which celebrates cultural and individual difference as a positive good to the university. For Princeton, Williams's answer is desirable because it "adds" color but does not add "race." Williams discloses that race has "never been a disadvantage," a statement that reaffirms the appeal to make race invisible as a factor of inclusion. Yet, Williams also speaks of being "torn." This word reveals emotional turmoil, an ambivalence, perhaps, to the arguments by the Black Justice League. Williams is Black but does not necessarily agree with the BJL.

Williams's statement highlights the fact that Black students have varying degrees of perceptions of inclusion at Princeton University. I do not seek to insinuate essentialist politics that group all Black students' experiences as similar; they are not. Members of the BJL are not speaking for the entirety of Black students at Princeton or other institutions. Instead, what BJL members are doing is disrupting the "systematic fantasy of imagined inclusiveness"⁹¹.

The struggle for Ethnic Studies with the demands by the Third World Liberation Front have demonstrated just this. After half a century, with Ethnic Studies as a doctoral program approved in some institutions, it would seem as if the arrival of non-white bodies was celebrated with open arms. Indeed, the language of diversity creates this happy mask. We are diverse, institutions continue to claim. However, diversity does not mean inclusion, and inclusion is not felt equally by all, as BJL members and other Black student groups on campuses have demonstrated.

Robin Kelley, in “Black Study, Black Struggle,” argues that “[t]he fully racialized social and epistemological architecture upon which the modern university is built cannot be radically transformed by ‘simply’ adding darker faces, safer spaces, better training, and a curriculum that acknowledges historical and contemporary oppressions.”⁹² Indeed, the “addition” of darker faces has merely shifted the normative definitions of whom could be considered “normal,” or “respectable”. If anything, the incorporation of racial difference has created divides: that some minorities are “good” (enough) to make it to the ivory tower, and those who didn’t are labeled the unsuccessful and the left behind. The discourse of diversity is designed to create the tolerant white individual who, under their own moral benevolence and progressiveness, accepts people from “different backgrounds.” All the while, the center—those who have power—has not shifted. It has simply expanded, not eradicated nor subverted the power structure.

I agree with Kelley-- universities will “never be engines of social transformation,” and they are certainly not, or rather, cannot be, radical sites in and of themselves.⁹³ But I do not want to end this project with a bleak note of despair-- that there cannot be any change. And it has been also troubling, frustrating, and painful for me, as a non-American woman of color, to critique the limitations of the academy for social change in an honors project that fulfills the degree requirements for me to graduate. This research has forced me to interrogate within myself the limitations and implications of this project itself-- if I am writing that the academy has only

transformed racial difference into palatable, consumable, acceptable forms of difference packaged as “diversity,” then what is the purpose of this project?

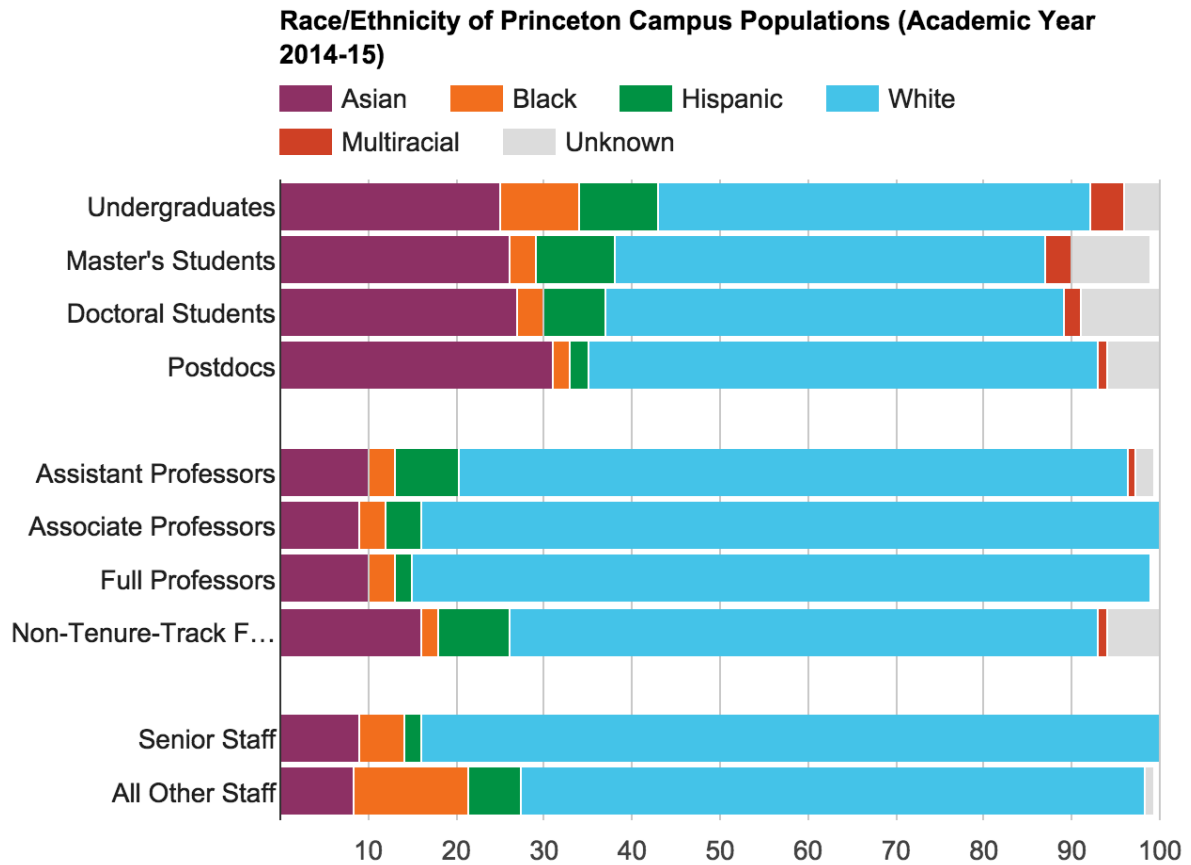
It is appealing to imagine this project as a discursive *intervention* in the pervasive discourse of diversity or as a means for questioning the implications of student activism within the larger context of the Black Lives Matter movement. However, it is perhaps not the point to measure how subversive or resistant this work “could” be. As Kelley writes, “[W]inning is not always the point. Unveiling the university’s exploitative practices and its deeply embedded structures of racism, sexism, and class inequality can be profound acts of demystification on their own.”⁹⁴ If creating “winnable demands” were the goal for Black liberation groups on student campuses, then the possibilities of the demands would be immediately constrained by what we imagine to be the parameters of the University. In essence, students would always be working under the bureaucratic system of the University instead of thinking about how they could begin to question and challenge the very underpinnings of the institution that keep it functioning. What is important to me is that I interrupt the prevailing liberal discourse of what constitutes “real” change. *The list of demands is futile because the things demanded are not possible to achieve*, opponents of the protesters say, *Protesting doesn’t do anything; peaceful ‘dialogue’ with the administration does*. Transformative change will never be possible if the people most marginalized do not have the space to imagine a better future.

Arundhati Roy says, “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”⁹⁵ Roy’s words offer a glimmer of hope. This project has demonstrated that the academy does not value Black students—only their “difference.” Adding difference in the catalog of things the academy tolerates is not enough. To survive in this academy that is not meant for Black students, for queer students, for disabled, undocumented, low-income, first-generation, or non-binary students-- it is imperative that students, staff and faculty create space to imagine the

academy that we want, to transform it entirely, to make its foundations and historical legacies transparent.

Appendix

Figure 1. Princeton University's Racial/Ethnic Background for Academic Year 2014-2015 on "Many Voices, One Future" Website as of September 26th, 2015



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- ¹ “President’s Statement on the Trustee Diversity Report,” Office of the President, September 12, 2013, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.princeton.edu/president/eisgruber/speeches-writings/archive/?id=10969>
- ² Hannah Waxman & Do-Hyeong Myeong, “Updated: Students “walkout and speakout,” occupy Nassau Hall until demands of Black Justice League are met,” November 18, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://dailyprincetonian.com/news/2015/11/students-walkout-and-speakout-occupy-nassau-hall-until-demands-of-black-justice-league-are-met/>
- ³ Fisher, “Princeton and the Fight Over Woodrow Wilson’s Legacy,” *The Atlantic*, 25 November 2015, accessed March 8 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/princeton-and-the-fight-over-woodrow-wilsons-legacy>.
- ⁴ As quoted by Jana Sawicki, “Identity Politics and Sexual Freedom: Foucault and Feminism,” in *Foucault and Feminism: Reflections on Resistance*, ed. by Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988) 185. Emphasis mine.
- ⁵ Fisher, “Princeton and the Fight Over Woodrow Wilson’s Legacy,” *The Atlantic*, November 25, 2015, accessed March 8 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/princeton-and-the-fight-over-woodrow-wilsons-legacy>
- ⁶ Nancy A. Naples, “Feminist Methodology,” *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), accessed April 2016, http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/uid=926/tocnode?id=g9781405124331_yr2012_chunk_g978140512433112_ss1-42
- ⁷ Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Feminist Review*, 30 (1988): 61-88, accessed April 14, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1395054>
- ⁸ For more information about power as productive, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995)
- ⁹ The Combahee River Collective is a group formed by Black feminists and Black lesbians in 1974 in Boston Massachusetts. They were most well known for the Combahee River Collective Statement, which was one of the earliest document to articulate the necessity of examining multiple oppressions. Read the statement: Barbara Smith, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000).
- ¹⁰ I write this statement *not* to make invisible the critical work Black feminists played in the second wave feminist movement-- but to highlight what they were critiquing, mainly that white western feminism has failed to take into account the specific and particular experiences of Black women as well as women of color.
- ¹¹ Lisa Lowe, “Imagining Los Angeles in the Production of Multiculturalism,” in *Immigrant Acts* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 86.
- ¹² Joyce M. Bell and Douglas Hartmann, “Diversity in Everyday Discourse: The Cultural Ambiguities and Consequences of ‘Happy Talk,’” *American Sociological Review* 72 (2007): 895-914. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472502>
- ¹³ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014): 5.
- ¹⁴ Matt Pearce, “Hunger striker gives credit to fellow activists fighting racism at University of Missouri,” *LA Times*, November 10, 2015, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-missouri-hunger-striker-20151110-story.html>
- ¹⁵ Brad Crawford, “Here’s the list of demands from Mizzou’s protesting athletes, students,” *Saturday Down South*, November 8 2015, accessed November 17 2015, <http://www.saturdaydownsouth.com/mizzou-football/heres-list-demands-mizzous-protesting-athletes-students/>
- ¹⁶ “UM System President Wolfe Resigns,” last modified November 9 2015, http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/news/leadership_news/news_110915
- ¹⁷ Recognizing that everyone defines racial justice differently, in the context of my paper, I propose Race Forward’s definition of racial justice: “the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all.” See “About Race Forward,” Race Forward, accessed November 20 2015, <https://www.raceforward.org/about>
- ¹⁸ The Black Lives Matter movement is the (re)building of a Black Liberation movement that expresses how Black people and Black communities in this nation are dehumanized through various forms of state violence.
- ¹⁹ “National University Rankings,” last modified 2015, <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities>
- ²⁰ Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 153.
- ²¹ bell hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance,” In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 23.
- ²² Ellen Berrey, *The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 42.

- ²³ I use the term “corporatized university” to refer to the trend of universities following business models. This practice prioritizes cutting down costs and seeking efficiency by seeing students as customers, having greater proportion of administrators, and employing adjunct professors, who have fewer benefits and security, over promoting them to tenure track positions. See Noam Chomsky, “The Death Of American Universities,” *Jacobin*, March 3, 2014, accessed November 24, 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/03/the-death-of-american-universities/>
- ²⁴ Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 65.
- ²⁵ “About,” Princeton University, accessed November 6 2015, <https://inclusive.princeton.edu/about>
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- ²⁸ Berrey, *The Enigma of Diversity*, 77.
- ²⁹ Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 91.
- ³⁰ Berrey, *The Enigma of Diversity*, 8.
- ³¹ Christopher Eisgruber, “Response to the Report of the Special Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,” accessed November 24 2015, <http://www.princeton.edu/vpsec/cpuc/CLEs-response.pdf>
- ³² Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 58.
- ³³ Cord Jefferson, “Ivy League Fooled: How America’s Top Colleges Avoid Diversity,” *Good*, September 2, 2011, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://magazine.good.is/articles/ivy-league-fooled-how-america-s-top-colleges-avoid-real-diversity>
- ³⁴ “Inclusive Language,” Princeton University, accessed November 6 2015, <https://inclusive.princeton.edu/about/language>
- ³⁵ Sarah Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 158.
- ³⁶ Jim Salter and Jim Suhr, “University Of Missouri Starts Reviewing Demands From Student Activists,” *Huffington Post*, November 13 2015, accessed November 20 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/university-of-missouri-demands_56468f35e4b0603773492b6e
- ³⁷ “BJL History,” Black Justice League, accessed March 12 2016, <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Ug4cr4ijpeBaPOdSJcHTNsxYoGLTacRmA6mSQXqKp3A/edit>
- ³⁸ “#OccupyNassau Meet Black Student's Demands,” Black Justice League at Princeton University, accessed March 8 2016, <https://www.change.org/p/princeton-university-administration-occupynassau-meet-black-student-s-demands>
- ³⁹ University Press Club, “Live Blog: Student Walkout and Sit-in,” <http://www.universitypressclub.com/archive/2015/11/live-blog-student-walkout/>
- ⁴⁰ This is to reject against the notion that student protests are happening *because* Black students are entering the classroom. Black students have historically been at institutions of higher learning--I seek to disrupt the tendency to erase/invizibilize Black students’ presence on campus by highlighting the present perfect tense in the chant.
- ⁴¹ “#OccupyNassau Meet Black Student's Demands.”
- ⁴² “An Open Letter On Free Speech, Our Demands, and Civil Disruption,” last modified December 2, 2015, Black Justice League, accessed March 14, 2015, on <https://medium.com/@theblackjusticeleague/an-open-letter-on-free-speech-our-demands-and-civil-disruption-8fa9b94f8167#.b3lyiaswy>
- ⁴³ Eric S. Yellin, *Racism in the Nation’s Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson’s America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 2.
- ⁴⁴ Yellin, *Racism in the Nation’s Service*, 161.
- ⁴⁵ Yellin, *Racism in the Nation’s Service*, 105.
- ⁴⁶ William Gibbs McAdoo to Woodrow Wilson, March 31, 1913, box 517, William Gibbs McAdoo Papers cited in Yellin, *Racism in the Nation’s Service*, 161.
- ⁴⁷ Wilson hired many men who were useful in weaving the threads of white supremacy into state politics, men such as Josephus Daniels and John Skelton Williams. While Wilson may not have been *explicitly* racist, he did little to subvert the structures that kept Blacks from achieving political power, particularly if this meant preserving the welfare of other non-Black Americans.
- ⁴⁸ Woodrow Wilson, “8th Annual Message,” December 7, 1920, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed 6 April 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29561>, emphasis mine.
- ⁴⁹ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*, (Canada: Hill and Wang, 1996): xi-xii.
- ⁵⁰ The idea of Manifest Destiny is closely linked to American Exceptionalism, which posits the United States as a special from other countries-- and therefore has the responsibility to propagate its own political and moral views on democracy

and liberty. Also see Robert W. Johannsen, "Introduction," in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, edited by Sam W. Haynes and Christopher Morris, (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1997): 3-6.

⁵¹ Woodrow Wilson, "Address at Independence Hall: 'The Meaning of Liberty,'" July 4, 1914, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65381>.

⁵² "Moral Diplomacy" is in contrast to the "dollar diplomacy," a term used by President William Howard Taft to describe U.S. intervention policies in Latin America and Asia. It encouraged bilateral international relations by means of economic support. The Taft administration urged the use of loans and investment abroad to further U.S. business interests. For more information on Wilson, see:

Britannica Academic, s. v. "Veracruz incident," accessed April 12, 2016,

<http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/625812/Veracruz-incident>; Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. "Woodrow Wilson: Foreign Affairs." Accessed April 14, 2016. <http://millercenter.org/president/biography/wilson-foreign-affairs>;

Ross A. Kennedy, *Wiley Blackwell Companions to American History: Companion to Woodrow Wilson* (Somerset, US: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

⁵³ Woodrow Wilson: "Annapolis Commencement Address," June 5, 191, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65380>.

⁵⁴ Blake Neff, "Princeton Students Take Over President's Office, Demand Erasure Of Woodrow Wilson," *The Daily Caller*, November 18 2015, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://dailycaller.com/2015/11/18/princeton-students-take-over-presidents-office-demand-erasure-of-woodrow-wilson/>

⁵⁵ "#OccupyNassau Meet Black Student's Demands."

⁵⁶ "#OccupyNassau Meet Black Student's Demands."

⁵⁷ Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984): 42.

⁵⁸ As of March 8, 2016.

⁵⁹ Fisher, "Princeton and the Fight Over Woodrow Wilson's Legacy."

⁶⁰ Alexandra Markovich, et al., "Live Blog: Student Walkout and Sit-in," on University Press Club, November 18th 2015, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.universitypressclub.com/archive/2015/11/live-blog-student-walkout/>

⁶¹ Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 12.

⁶² Seemanthini Niranjana, *Gender and Space: Femininity, Sexualization and the Female Body*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001): 37.

⁶³ McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place*.

⁶⁴ As of March 10, 2016.

⁶⁵ April C. Amrstrong, "A Brief History of the Architecture of Nassau Hall," June 17, 2015, accessed March 5, 2016, https://www.google.com/search?q=history+of+nassau+hall&oq=history+of+nassau+hall&aqs=chrome..69i57.2050j0j4&sourceid=chrome&es_sm=119&ie=UTF-8

⁶⁶ "Princeton in the Nation's Service & in the Service of All Nations," Office of Human Resources, accessed March 5, 2016, <https://www.princeton.edu/hr/working/profiles/service/>

⁶⁷ "Princeton in the Nation's Service," *Princeton University Press*, <http://libwebprod.princeton.edu/mudd-exhibits/wilsonline//indn8nsvc.html>

⁶⁸ Tad Benicoff, "African Americans and Princeton University: A Brief History," <http://libguides.princeton.edu/c.php?g=84056&p=544526%20>

⁶⁹ University Press Club, "Live Blog: Student Walkout and Sit-in," <http://www.universitypressclub.com/archive/2015/11/live-blog-student-walkout/>

⁷⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 69, emphasis mine.

⁷¹ Alexandria Robinson, "Leaving Nassau Hall," Nassau Weekly, December 12, 2015, accessed March 17 2016, <http://www.nassauweekly.com/leaving-nassau-hall/>

⁷² "Mission Statement," Department of Public Safety, accessed March 12, 2016, <https://publicsafety.princeton.edu/about/mission>

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995): 187.

⁷⁴ "#OccupyNassau Meet Black Student's Demands."

⁷⁵ "Princeton Open Campus Coalition," accessed March 15, 2016

<https://www.facebook.com/PrincetonOpenCampusCoalition/posts/1658903194349237:0>

⁷⁶ "Princeton Open Campus Coalition," accessed March 15, 2016

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- ⁷⁷“Princeton Open Campus Coalition.”
- ⁷⁸ “Princeton Open Campus Coalition,” accessed March 15, 2016
<https://www.facebook.com/PrincetonOpenCampusCoalition/posts/1658903194349237:0> emphasis mine.
- ⁷⁹ “Princeton Open Campus Coalition,” accessed March 15, 2016
<https://www.facebook.com/PrincetonOpenCampusCoalition/posts/1658903194349237:0>
- ⁸⁰ “Mission Statement,” Princeton University, accessed March 14, 2016,
<https://www.princeton.edu/main/about/mission/>
- ⁸¹ Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004), 110.
- ⁸² Puwar, *Space Invaders*, 112-113.
- ⁸³ I use the word “does” in reference to civility in order to emphasize how language and words becomes a speech act--the word civility *does* something because it connotes binaries like civil/savage, respectable/unrespectable, and civilized/primitive.
- ⁸⁴“Princeton Open Campus Coalition.”
- ⁸⁵ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 68.
- ⁸⁶ “President Eisgruber sends message on recent discussions about campus climate,” Office of Communications, November 22, 2015, accessed March 15, 2016,
<https://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S44/82/14K15/index.xml?section=topstories>, emphasis mine.
- ⁸⁷ David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 211.
- ⁸⁸ Ronald A. Kuykendall, “The Logic of Whiteness,” *Media Diversified*, March 2, 2015, accessed March 15, 2016,
<http://mediadiversified.org/2015/03/02/the-logic-of-whiteness/>
- ⁸⁹ University Press Club, “Live Blog: Student Walkout and Sit-in,”
<http://www.universitypressclub.com/archive/2015/11/live-blog-student-walkout/>
- ⁹⁰ Andy Newman, “At Princeton, Woodrow Wilson, a Heralded Alum, Is Recast as an Intolerant One,” *The New York Times*, November 22, 2015, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/23/nyregion/at-princeton-addressing-a-racist-legacy-and-seeking-to-remove-woodrow-wilsons-name.html>
- ⁹¹ Puwar, *Space Invaders*, 136.
- ⁹² Robin Kelley, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” *The Boston Review*, March 7, 2016, accessed April 7 2016,
<https://bostonreview.net/forum/robin-d-g-kelley-black-study-black-struggle>
- ⁹³ Kelley, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” 2016.
- ⁹⁴ Kelley, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” 2016.
- ⁹⁵ Arundhati Roy, “Confronting Empire,” *Outlook*, January 30 2016, accessed April 7 2016,
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